

LEARNING LUCID DREAMING

By ATHENA 1/14/86

(taken from Lucid Dreaming, Stephen LaBerge, Ph.D)

In order to recognize that you are dreaming, you need first of all to have a concept of what dreaming is. What happens when you "realize you are dreaming" will depend upon what you understand "dreaming" to be.

Stage 1) Ordinary, non-lucid dreams: dreams are not distinguished from waking life.

Stage 2) Out-of-body experiences: you find yourself in a sort of mental body floating around in what seems to be the physical world.

Stage 3) Fully lucid dreaming: the dreamer realizes that the experience is entirely mental and that the dream world is completely distinct from the physical world.

POTENTIAL FOR LUCID DREAMING

There are two essential requirements for learning lucid dreaming: motivation and good dream recall. The necessity of motivation: lucid dreaming demands considerable control of attention, and hence we must be motivated to exert the necessary effort. And, if we can remember some dreams, then we can remember lucid dreams.

Part II: DREAM RECALL

In order to have a lucid dream and know about it when you awaken, you have to remember your dreams. For one thing, the more frequently you remember dreams, and the clearer and more detailed your pictures become, the more likely you are to remember lucid dreams. The more familiar you become with what your own dreams are like, the easier you will find it to recognize them as dreams while they happen. Thus, if you want to learn to dream lucidly, you need first of all to learn to reliably recall your dreams.

One of the most important determinants of dream recall is motivation. For the most part, those who want to remember their dreams can do so, and those who do not want to do not. For many people, simply having the intention to remember, reminding themselves of this intention just before bed, is enough. One effective way to strengthen this resolve is to keep a dream journal beside your bed and record whatever you can remember of your dreams everytime you wake up. As you record your dreams, you will remember more dreams. Reading over your dream journal can provide an added benefit: the more familiar you become with what your dreams are like, the easier it will be for you to recognize one while it is still happening and therefore to awaken in your dream.

An infallible method for developing your ability to remember dreams is to get in the habit of asking yourself, every time you wake up, "What was I dreaming?" This must be your first thought upon awakening; otherwise, you will forget some or all of the dream due to interference from other thoughts. You must not give up too quickly if nothing is recalled at first, but persist patiently in the effort to remember, without moving or thinking of anything else, and in most cases, pieces and fragments of the dream will come to you. If you still cannot remember a dream, ask yourself what you were just thinking and how you are feeling. Examining your thoughts and feelings in this way can

often provide the necessary cues for retrieving the entire dream.

In developing dream recall, as with any other skill, progress is sometimes slow. Do not be discouraged if you do not succeed at first. Remember: Each of us masters the ability to recall our dreams at our own rate.

Part III: LEARNING LUCID DREAMING

Learning lucid dreaming is work, and it requires a certain amount of discipline at first, but it becomes easier--even effortless--with practice.

Before giving the technique the author (LaBerge) uses, here are some examples of technique that have been used in the past:

Paul Tholey, a German psychologist, states that the most effective method for achieving lucidity is to develop "a critical-reflective attitude" toward your state of consciousness, by asking yourself whether or not you are dreaming while you are awake. He stresses the importance of asking the critical question ("Am I dreaming or not?") as frequently as possible, at least five to ten times a day, and in every situation that seems dreamlike. Asking the question at bedtime and while falling asleep is also favorable.

Oliver Fox regarded a critical frame of mind as the key to lucid dreaming, and it is easy to see why asking the question "Am I dreaming or not?" ought to favor the occurrence of lucid dreams. We most often dream about familiar activities from our waking life, and if we never ask whether we are dreaming or not while awake, why should we do so while dreaming? Or, to put it more positively, the more often we critically question our state of consciousness while awake, the more likely we are to do so while dreaming.

One method of inducing lucid dreaming is to enter the state from waking. A simple technique for maintaining conscious awareness during the transition from waking to sleep: count to yourself ("one, I'm dreaming; two, I'm dreaming," and so on) while drifting off to sleep, maintaining a certain level of vigilance as you do so. The result is that at some point--say, "forty-eight, I'm dreaming"--you will find that you are dreaming! The "I'm dreaming!" phrase helps to remind you of what you intend to do, but it is not strictly necessary. Simply focusing your attention on counting probably allows you to retain sufficient alertness to recognize dream images for what they are, when they appear. This and similar techniques apparently work best for people who tend to fall asleep rapidly, and frequently experience sleep-onset (hypnagogic) dreaming.

Another method, and for most people far easier, way to become lucid in a dream is to become very familiar with your dreams, get to know what is dreamlike about them, and simply intend to recognize that they are dreams while they are happening. Evidently, simply intending to recognize that one is dreaming is enough to increase the frequency of occurrence of lucid dreams.

Next part: a method with which the author could reliably induce lucid dreams.

Part IV: MNEMONIC INDUCTION OF LUCID DREAMS (MILD)

MILD is based on our ability to remember that there are actions we wish to perform in the future. Aside from writing ourselves memos we do this by forming a mental connection between what we want to do and the future circumstances in which we intend to do it. Making this connection is greatly facilitated by the mnemonic device--the memory aid--of visualizing yourself doing what it is you intend to remember. It is also helpful to verbalize the intention: "When such-and-such happens, I want to remember so-and-so." For Example: "When I pass the bank, I want to remember to draw out some cash."

The verbalization that the author uses to organize his intended effort is:

"Next time I'm dreaming, I want to recognize I'm dreaming." The "when" and "what" of the intended action must be clearly specified.

He generates this intention either immediately after awakening from an earlier REM period, or following a period of full wakefulness, as detailed below. An important point is that in order to produce the desired effect, it is necessary to do more than just mindlessly recite the phrase. You must really intend to have a lucid dream. Here is the recommended procedure spelled out step by step:

1) During the early morning, when you awaken spontaneously from a dream, go over the dream several times until you have memorized it.

2) Then, while lying in bed and returning to sleep, say to yourself, "Next time I'm dreaming, I want to remember to recognize I'm dreaming."

3) Visualize yourself as being back in the dream just rehearsed; only this time, see yourself realizing that you are, in fact, dreaming.

4) Repeat steps two and three until you feel your intention is clearly fixed or you fall asleep.

If all goes well, in a short time you will find yourself lucid in another dream (which need not closely resemble the one you have rehearsed).

The mental set involved in this procedure is much like the thought you adopt when you decide to awaken at a certain hour, and go to sleep after setting your mental alarm clock. The ability to awaken in your dreams may be regarded as a sort of refinement of the ability to awaken from your dreams.

If you find yourself just too drowsy to follow the procedure as described above, you might try to wake yourself up by engaging in several minutes of any activity that demands attention.

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Channel 5 People are likely to differ as to which of these two factors--wakefulness

and REM carryover--are more effective for them, and I recommend experimenting with both when using MILD to induce lucid dreams.

If you have any questions, feel free to ask!
Happy Lucid Dreaming --> HLD

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